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ABSTRACT

Providing a framework for Wisconsin educators to examine how they could include theater and drama within the school curriculum, this booklet presents five standards for students in grades 4, 8, and 12 that identify an element within theater that would enable students to know and understand theater by doing. The introductory section of the booklet discusses defining the academic standards, developing the academic standards, using the academic standards, relating the standards to all students, and applying the standards across the curriculum. The five standards presented in the paper are: play reading and analysis; performance; research and analysis of methods of presentation and audience response; analysis of the processes of theater artists; and theater production. Each standard in the booklet consists of a content standard, and performance standards for students at each of the grade levels 4, 8, and 12. Samples of proficient and minimal student work on creating a set design for a one-act play are attached. (RS)

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ED 413 624

Theatre

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Wisconsin's Model Academic Standards for Theatre

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Foreword

The past two years have been exciting for everyone at the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) as Wisconsin citizens became involved in the development of challenging academic standards in 12 curricular areas. We are now completing one of the most important educational planning efforts in the history of our state. Never before has there been greater discussion about education and what our students should know and be able to do before they graduate from high school.

Effective schools research tells us that one of the most important elements in improving the results of education is being clear about standards. Having clear standards for students and teachers makes it possible to develop rigorous local curricula and valid and reliable assessments. The data from such assessments tells us where we need to place our emphasis as we improve teaching and learning. Being sure that the entire community has input into academic standards is essential if everyone is to have ownership in the education of our students. We are proud that we have developed challenging academic standards not only in the areas traditionally associated with large-scale state and district assessment, but also in subjects where assessment takes place primarily in the classroom.

We believe that these standards will greatly assist parents and educators in preparing students for the twenty-first century. Although Wisconsin has traditionally led the nation in educational excellence, clear statements about what students should know and be able to do are necessary to maintain this strong tradition. My thanks to those of you in all walks of life who have contributed to this important effort.

John T. Benson
State Superintendent

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Introduction

Defining the Academic Standards

What are academic standards? Academic standards specify what students should know and be able to do, what they might be asked to do to give evidence of standards, and how well they must perform. They include content, performance, and proficiency standards.

— Content standards refer to *what* students should know and be able to do.

— Performance standards tell *how* students will show that they are meeting a standard.

— Proficiency standards indicate *how well* students must perform.

Why are academic standards necessary? Standards serve as rigorous goals for teaching and learning. Setting high standards enables students, parents, educators, and citizens to know what students should have learned at a given point in time. The absence of standards has consequences similar to lack of goals in any pursuit. Without clear goals, students may be unmotivated and confused.

Contemporary society is placing immense academic demands on students. Clear statements about what students must know and be able to do are essential to ensure that our schools offer students the opportunity to acquire the knowledge and skills necessary for success.

Why are state-level academic standards important? Public education is a state responsibility. The state superintendent and legislature must ensure that all children have equal access to high quality educational programs. At a minimum, this requires clear statements of what all children in the state should know and be able to do as well as evidence that students are meeting these expectations. Furthermore, academic standards form a sound basis on which to establish the content of a statewide assessment system.

Why does Wisconsin need its own academic standards? Historically, the citizens of Wisconsin are very serious and thoughtful about education. They expect and receive very high performance from their schools. While educational needs may be similar among states, values differ. Standards should reflect the collective values of the citizens and be tailored to prepare young people for economic opportunities that exist in Wisconsin, the nation, and the world.

Developing the Academic Standards

How were Wisconsin's model academic standards developed? Citizens throughout the state developed the academic standards. The first phase involved educators, parents, board of education members, and business and industry people who produced preliminary content and performance standards in 12 subjects including English language arts, mathematics, science, social studies, visual arts, music, theatre, dance, family and consumer education, foreign language, health education, and physical education. These standards are benchmarked to the end of grades 4, 8, and 12.

The next step required public input aimed at getting information to revise and improve the preliminary standards. This effort included forums and focus groups held throughout the state. The state superintendent used extensive media exposure, including telecommunications through the DPI home page, to ensure the widest possible awareness and participation in standards development.

Each subject had at least two drafts taken to the general public for their review. All comments received serious consideration. Based on this input, the standards were revised to reflect the values of Wisconsin's citizens.

Who wrote the academic standards and what resources were used? Each subject area's academic standards were drafted by teams of educators, parents, board of education members, and business and industry people that were sub-groups of larger task forces. This work was done after reviewing national

standards in the subject area, standards from other states, standards from local Wisconsin school districts, and standards developed by special groups like the nationwide New Standards Project.

How was the public involved in the standards process? The DPI was involved in extensive public engagement activities to gather citizen input on the first two drafts of the academic standards. Over 19 focus group sessions, 16 community forums, and more than 450 presentations at conferences, conventions, and workshops were held. More than 500,000 paper copies of the standards tabloids have been distributed across the state in addition to more than 4,000 citizen visits to the standards on the DPI web page. Input from these activities, along with more than 90 reviews by state and national organizations, provided the writers with feedback on Wisconsin's model academic standards.

Will academic standards be developed in areas other than the 12 areas listed above? Yes, currently the DPI has convened five task forces to begin development of academic standards in agriculture, business, environmental education, marketing, and technology education. Task force members include educators, parents, school board members, and representatives of business and industry. These academic standards will be completed by the start of the 1998-99 school year.

Using the Academic Standards

How will local districts use the academic standards? Adopting these standards is voluntary, not mandatory. Districts may use the academic standards as guides for developing local grade-by-grade level curriculum. Implementing standards may require some school districts to upgrade school and district curriculums. In some cases, this may result in significant changes in instructional methods and materials, local assessments, and professional development opportunities for the teaching and administrative staff.

What is the difference between academic standards and curriculum? Standards are statements about what students should know and be able to do, what they might be asked to do to give evidence of learning, and how well they should be expected to know or do it. Curriculum is the program devised by local school districts used to prepare students to meet standards. It consists of activities and lessons at each grade level, instructional materials, and various instructional techniques. In short, standards define what is to be learned at certain points in time, and from a broad perspective, what performances will be accepted as evidence that the learning has occurred. Curriculum specifies the details of the day-to-day schooling at the local level.

What is the link between statewide academic standards and statewide testing? Statewide academic standards in mathematics, English language arts, science, and social studies determine the scope of statewide testing. While these standards are much broader in content than any single Wisconsin Student Assessment System (WSAS) test, they do describe the range of knowledge and skills that may appear on the tests. If content does not appear in the academic standards, it will not be part of a WSAS test. The statewide standards clarify what must be studied to prepare for WSAS tests. If students have learned all of the material indicated by the standards in the assessed content areas, they should do very well on the state tests.

Relating the Academic Standards to All Students

Parents and educators of students with disabilities, with limited English proficiency (LEP), and with accelerated needs may ask why academic standards are important for their students. Academic standards serve as a valuable basis for establishing meaningful goals as part of each student's developmental progress and demonstration of proficiency. The clarity of academic standards provides meaningful, concrete goals for the achievement of students with exceptional education needs (EEN), LEP, and accelerated needs consistent with all other students.

Academic standards may serve as the foundation for individualized programming decisions for students with EEN, LEP, and accelerated needs. While the vast majority of students with EEN and LEP should be expected to work toward and achieve these standards, accommodations and modifications to help these students reach the achievement goals will need to be individually identified and implemented. For students with EEN, these decisions are made as part of their individualized education program (IEP) plans. Accelerated students may achieve well beyond the academic standards and move into advanced grade levels or into advanced coursework.

Clearly, these academic standards are for all students. As our state assessments are aligned with these standards and school districts adopt, adapt, or develop their own standards and multiple measures for determining proficiencies of students, greater accountability for the progress of all students can be assured. In Wisconsin this means all students reaching their full individual potential, every school being accountable, every parent a welcomed partner, every community supportive, and no excuses.

Applying the Academic Standards Across the Curriculum

When community members and employers consider what they want citizens and employees to know and be able to do, they often speak of broad areas of applied knowledge such as communication, thinking, problem solving, and decision making. These areas connect or go beyond the mastery of individual subject areas. As students apply their knowledge both within and across the various curricular areas, they develop the concepts and complex thinking of an educated person.

Community members need these skills to function as responsible citizens. Employers prize those employees who demonstrate these skills because they are people who can continue learning and connect what they have learned to the requirements of a job. College and university faculty recognize the need for these skills as the means of developing the level of understanding that separates the expert from the beginner.

Teachers in every class should expect and encourage the development of these shared applications, both to promote the learning of the subject content and to extend learning across the curriculum. These applications fall into five general categories:

1) **Application of the Basics**

2) **Ability to Think**
   - — Problem solving
   - — Informed decision making
   - — Systems thinking
   - — Critical, creative, and analytical thinking
   - — Imagining places, times, and situations different from one's own
   - — Developing and testing a hypothesis
   - — Transferring learning to new situations

3) **Skill in Communication**
   - — Constructing and defending an argument
   - — Working effectively in groups
   - — Communicating plans and processes for reaching goals
   - — Receiving and acting on instructions, plans, and models
   - — Communicating with a variety of tools and skills

4) **Production of Quality Work**
   - — Acquiring and using information
   - — Creating quality products and performances
   - — Revising products and performances
   - — Developing and pursuing positive goals

5) **Connections with Community**
   - — Recognizing and acting on responsibilities as a citizen
   - — Preparing for work and lifelong learning
   - — Contributing to the aesthetic and cultural life of the community
   - — Seeing oneself and one's community within the state, nation, and world
   - — Contributing and adapting to scientific and technological change

Overview of Theatre

Theatre is unique because it borrows its content from other disciplines and then applies it to an expressive, aesthetic form. Some may look at these standards and point out they are performance standards, not true content standards. However, the pure content of theatre is what is taught in history, language arts, science, and mathematics. What is unique to theatre is its active form.

It is unfortunate that most theatre available to students is as a co-curricular activity. In many instances, a student's only exposure to theatre is through the class play or school musical. While these opportunities are exciting and most worthwhile, they limit student participation and experience. Theatre and drama, to be effective, must be included in the school curriculum. The content standards in theatre were created to provide a framework for educators to examine how they could include theatre and drama within the school curriculum. Each standard identifies an element within theatre that would enable students to know and understand theatre by doing.

The standards also teach broader learning concepts. The skills of critical thinking, problem-solving, working with others, communication skills, and decision making are integral to every element of theatre and carry over into all of the other subject areas. Recent studies have shown that students who participate in the arts, especially theatre, do better academically, and are more successful in their career endeavors than those who do not.

A: Play Reading and Analysis

CONTENT STANDARD

Students in Wisconsin will attend live theatre and read plays, be able to analyze and evaluate the play, and articulate (create meaning from) the play's message for individuals and society.

Rationale: The sense of immediacy and sense of community experienced at a live theatrical performance is a different kind of audience experience from attending a movie or watching television or a video. Attending live theatre helps students learn appropriate audience skills of listening and responding. Attending live theatre and reading plays also help students learn critical thinking skills and problem-solving skills. These experiences foster the use of imagination and the awareness of a variety of dramatic styles (genres) and cultures. They also develop a sense of aesthetics through exposure to and discussion of different artistic styles.

PERFORMANCE STANDARDS

BY THE END OF GRADE 4 STUDENTS WILL:

A1: **attend a live theatre performance and discuss the experience**

- explain what happened in the play
- identify and describe the characters
- say what they liked and didn't like
- describe the scenery, lighting and/or costumes

A2: **read a play**

- explain what happened in the play
- identify and describe the characters
- say what they liked and didn't like

BY THE END OF GRADE 8 STUDENTS WILL:

A1: **attend a live theatrical performance and be able to analyze, evaluate, and create personal meaning from the experience through small group discussion**

- say what they liked and didn't like, and why
- explain what happened in the play and discuss why they think the playwright made particular choices
- explain how the technical aspects of the play helped to present the message of the play
- explain the message of the play

A2: **read a play and be able to analyze, evaluate, and create personal meaning from the experience through small group discussion**

- say what they liked and didn't like, and why
- explain what happened in the play and discuss why they think the playwright made particular choices
- explain the message of the play

BY THE END OF GRADE 12 STUDENTS WILL:

A1: **attend a live theatrical performance and be able to explain the personal meaning derived from the experience, and also be able to analyze, evaluate, and create meaning in a broader social and cultural context in either written or oral form**

- articulate with increased understanding what they liked and didn't like and why
- explain what happened in the play and why they think the playwright made particular choices
- explain what happened in the play and why they think the director and actors made particular choices
- explain how the technical aspects of the play supported the choices of the playwright, director, and actors
- describe how the audience appeared to respond to the play
- explain the message of the play and its meaning to individuals and to society

A2: **read a play and be able to analyze, evaluate, and create meaning in broader social and cultural context in either written or oral form**

- articulate with increased understanding what they liked and didn't like and why
- explain what happened in the play and why they think the playwright made particular choices
- explain the message of the play and its meaning to individuals and to society

THEATRE

B: Performance

CONTENT STANDARD

Students in Wisconsin will work and think as actors and develop basic acting skills to portray characters who interact in improvised and scripted scenes.

Rationale: Acting teaches students important communication skills. It teaches students to make ideas and feelings clear and to pay attention with their ears and eyes. Through acting, students learn to imagine, solve problems, and adapt to change. Improvisational acting (creating characters and scenes without a script) encourages students to use their creative powers to better understand how humans think, feel, and live. By placing themselves in others' shoes, students also learn to empathize and develop a personal understanding of other people's situations and experiences. As Shakespeare wrote, "All the world's a stage, And all the men and women merely players."

PERFORMANCE STANDARDS

BY THE END OF GRADE 4 STUDENTS WILL:

B1: pretend to be someone else, creating a character based on scripted material or through improvisation, using props, costume pieces, and ideas

B2: create a human or animal character through physical movement with sounds and/or speech, using facial expressions

B3: create a human or animal character based upon a costume or object (prop)

B4: create a human or animal character based upon an original idea

THEATRE

C: Research and Analysis

CONTENT STANDARD

Students in Wisconsin will research and analyze methods of presentation and audience response for theatre, the interconnections of theatre, community, other cultures, and historical periods for use as general knowledge.

Rationale: Research and analysis teaches students how to study subjects in great depth. It provides them with tools to make reasoned judgments, rational decisions, and critical choices. Students learn to understand subject matter in relationship to ideas, symbols, and images in society today and interpret these forms and their effect on an audience, culture, and society.

PERFORMANCE STANDARDS

BY THE END OF GRADE 4 STUDENTS WILL:

C1: create a play based on information collected from another culture, subject area, or historic time period

C2: select a story or topic and plan a play with a beginning, middle, and end

C3: find information to help develop characters and the appropriate background for the presentation

BY THE END OF GRADE 8 STUDENTS WILL:

B1: create a character through physical movement, adapting movement and making physical choices to fit the requirements of the scene

B2: create a character verbally, adapting language choices and dialogue to fit requirements of the scene

STUDENTS IN A THEATRE CLASS WILL:

B1: create a believable and sustained character within a scripted or improvised context

B2: create a character that is appropriate to the context of the scene, using facial expressions

B3: select costume pieces or a hand prop (such as a basket) and create a character based upon that item

B4: create a character (physically, verbally, and facially) from a scripted scene

B5: create a character (physically, verbally, and facially) from an original idea

BY THE END OF GRADE 12 STUDENTS IN A THEATRE CLASS WILL:

B1: create a believable, sustained character exhibiting basic acting skills including physical and vocal technique in a presentation that shows their understanding of the emotional and psychological makeup of the character

B2: continue to create characters through physical movement, adapting movement and making physical choices to fit the requirements of the scene

B3: continue to create characters verbally, adapting language choices and dialogue to fit requirement of the scene

B4: continue to create characters that are appropriate to the context of the scene, using facial expressions

B5: continue to create characters (physically, verbally, and facially) from scripted scenes

B6: create a character (physically, verbally, and facially) based upon an original idea, playing the character for a sustained period of time

B7: articulate in written and oral form the character's wants, needs, and basic personality characteristics

BY THE END OF GRADE 8 STUDENTS WILL:

C1: identify similarities and differences between various artistic mediums such as film, video, or television

C2: read a play and exhibit understanding of the cultural/historical connections through discussions and/or written work

C3: discuss the cultural/historical importance of a play through group discussion or written work

STUDENTS IN A THEATRE CLASS WILL:

C1: explain in writing what they liked and didn't like about a dramatic presentation and justify their comments

C2: write a review of a play and demonstrate an understanding of how a presentation was the same or different than other media presentations

C3: continue to select stories or topics and plan plays with beginnings, middles, and ends

C4: continue to find information to help develop characters and the appropriate backgrounds for presentations

BY THE END OF GRADE 12 STUDENTS IN A THEATRE CLASS WILL:

C1: write a critical review of a live theatrical event, its effect on the audience, and its potential impact in a broader social and cultural context

C2: select a play or theatre-related event or individual and research the topic, gathering information from more than one source

C3: explain in writing the potential impact of a play on society and culture

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THEATRE

D: Analysis of Process

CONTENT STANDARD

Students in Wisconsin will work and think as theatre artists and reflect upon and assess the characteristics and merits of their own work and the work of others.

Rationale: Theatre's uniqueness is rooted in the essential interaction with others. Exchange of feedback between actor and audience, director and actor, and director and designer is an essential component of theatre. What works, what doesn't work, and, perhaps more importantly, why or why not is at the heart of the theatre process and any problem-solving activity. Good communication skills are vital for gaining greater understanding and working cooperatively with others.

PERFORMANCE STANDARDS

BY THE END OF GRADE 4 STUDENTS WILL:

D1: explain strengths and weakness of their own work and that of others

D2: identify strengths ("what worked") and weaknesses ("what didn't work") in character work and scenes presented in class

D3: identify what they need to do to make their character or scene more believable and/or understandable

D4: share their comments constructively and supportively within the group

THEATRE

E: Theatre Production

CONTENT STANDARD

Students will think and work as playwrights, designers, managers, and/or directors to create and interpret improvised and scripted scenes.

Rationale: Production work based on personal experiences, cultural contexts, heritage, literature, and history enable students to better understand the diversity of the world, gain insight into how people think, feel, and live, and develop skills important to work within a variety of contexts. Playwrighting teaches basic script structure and developing character and story through dialogue. Design teaches students to develop their sense of spatial and geometric relationships, and increases students' sensory ability to work with color, texture, line, and form. Management teaches students basic business skills (such as developing, maintaining, and working within a budget), technical writing skills, advertising skills, and life skills (such as goal setting and working with deadlines). Directing teaches students how to work with others in leadership roles, how to organize and carry out complicated tasks, how to analyze literature, and how to define and solve problems.

PERFORMANCE STANDARDS

BY THE END OF GRADE 4 STUDENTS WILL:

E1: create a scene or play based on a story, another piece of literature, or an idea, with a beginning, middle, and end

E2: use props or furniture to create an environment for drama and create a character with costume pieces

E3: explain their choices for setting, characters, and other artistic elements

E4: create publicity for a dramatic presentation

E5: make decisions regarding the scene's visual elements (such as where doors are located or where the audience will sit)

E6: rehearse and perform a scene or play for peers and invited guests

BY THE END OF GRADE 8 STUDENTS WILL:

D1: accept and use criticism constructively to revise and refine their own work

D2: share their comments constructively and supportively within the group

STUDENTS IN A THEATRE CLASS WILL:

D1: continue to identify strengths ("what worked") and weaknesses ("what didn't work") in character work and scenes presented in class

D2: identify what they need to do to make their character or scene more believable and/or understandable

BY THE END OF GRADE 12 STUDENTS WILL:

D1: reflect on and assess their own work and the work of others

D2: continue to share their comments constructively and supportively within the group

STUDENTS IN A THEATRE CLASS WILL:

D1: demonstrate increased understanding of strengths ("what worked") and weaknesses ("what didn't work") in character work and scenes presented in class

D2: demonstrate increased understanding of what they need to do to make their characters or scenes more believable and/or understandable

BY THE END OF GRADE 8 STUDENTS IN A THEATRE CLASS WILL:

E1: improvise a scene or play with a problem or conflict

E2: script their scene or play using proper scripting format

E3: develop an understanding of design by creating a floor plan or visual representation of a play or literature selection

E4: analyze a play and determine appropriate setting, lighting, costume, and make-up requirements

E5: read a play and describe the potential visual and emotional effect it has on an audience

E6 exhibit understanding of theatre management through direct involvement in a public performance by making posters, selling tickets, and/or ushering

E7: rehearse and perform a scene or play for peers or invited guests

BY THE END OF GRADE 12 STUDENTS IN A THEATRE CLASS WILL:

E1: create an original scene that includes the appropriate exposition, rising action, problem, conflict, crisis, and solution

E2: script their scene using proper script format

E3: analyze a play and determine appropriate setting, lighting, sound, costume, and make-up requirements

E4: research and design at least one element of a play (sets, costumes, make-up, lights, and/or sound)

E5: demonstrate in written or oral form, an increased understanding of the importance of one aspect of theatre management in the successful promotion of theatre production

E6: direct a scene for presentation

E7: make decisions regarding the scene's visual elements (such as where doors are located or where the audience will sit)

E8: plan the blocking patterns of the dramatic presentation (placement and movement of actors within a scene) and guide the actors through their blocking

E9: create a rehearsal schedule, planning and organizing all rehearsals and deadlines until the performance

E10: rehearse and perform the scene for an audience

Sample Proficiency Standard

THEATRE

E: Theatre Production

CONTENT STANDARD

Students will think and work as playwrights, designers, managers, and/or directors to create and interpret improvised and scripted scenes.

PERFORMANCE STANDARDS

E4: **By the end of grade 12, students in theatre class will research and design at least one element of a play (sets, costumes, make-up, lights, and/or sound).**

SAMPLE TASK

Assume the role of set designer. Read a play called *The Still Alarm*, by George S. Kaufman, and create a set design (floor plan) for a proscenium stage that will meet the demands of the play. Include the shape, size, and position of each of the elements that make up the set design. Additionally, provide an explanation of the set design created.

Materials:

1. A script of the play *The Still Alarm*, by George S. Kaufman
2. An analysis page which enables you to identify the elements of the play
3. A planning page to practice designing a floor plan.
4. A final drawing page for the set design on which are identified the front and back of the stage and where the audience is located.
5. A page for you to explain your set design and provide a rationale for your decision.

Process:

You will be given 30 minutes to read the play and complete the analysis page. Then you will be given 45 minutes to sketch preliminary designs, complete a final floor plan, and provide a rationale for your work. You will be scored on the final set design and rationale.

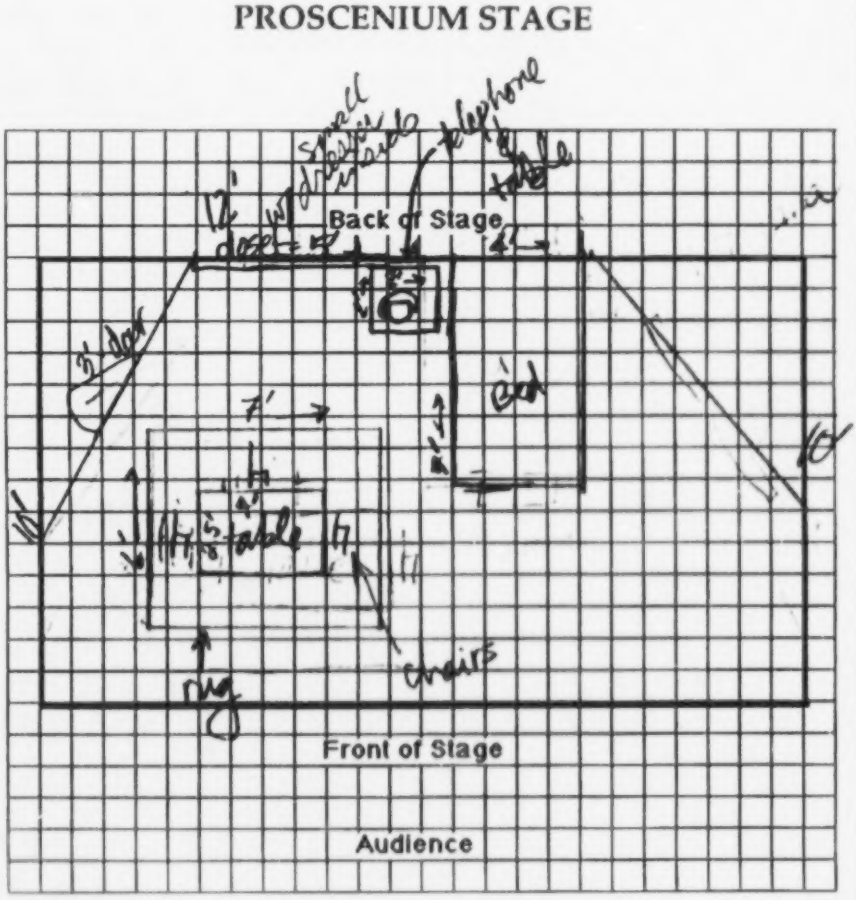
SAMPLES OF STUDENT WORK

Students are assessed on their ability to create a set design (floor plan) for a one-act play, relate set design features directly to the physical requirements of the script, address the action of the play (character requirements) within the set design, and analyze and explain the thought processes and choices involved in planning the set design.

EXPLANATION OF RATINGS OF STUDENT WORK

Student Explanation of Floor Plan Design:

First of all I wanted a simple room. I have the basics of a door and two windows. Both are called for in the play and are basic parts of any room. Then I needed a bed because this play takes place in a hotel bedroom. Next I picked a closet because all hotel rooms I've been in have a closet. The play calls for a dresser so I have a small one inside the closet. Next to the bed I put a small table and a telephone on it. The play calls for a telephone and most simple hotel rooms have the phone right next to the bed. There also needed to be a table. I placed the table downstage a bit from the bed so there would be a little more room. There also needed to be a rug which I put under the table. I basically wanted something very simple that would hint of calmness like the acting in the play. I also think the table being downstage a bit helps to allow the actors more room so nothing seems crowded or rushed.



Proficient

The set design contains all of the elements of the play. The set pieces are arranged to accommodate the movement of the actors and allow adequate space for the performance. The set design allows for the audience to view all of the action identified in the play.

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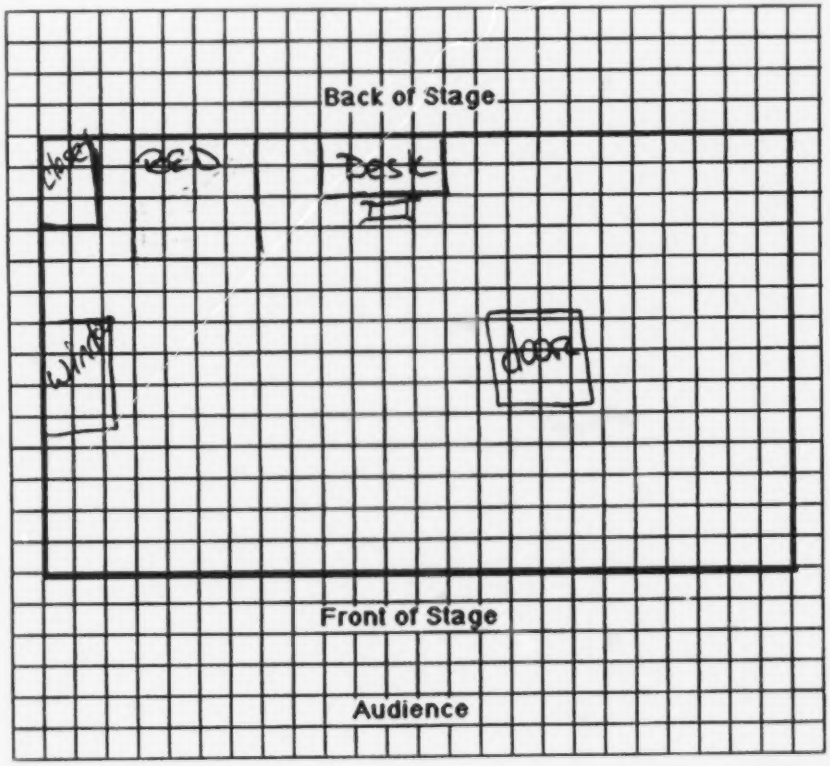
PROSCENIUM STAGE

Student Explanation of Floor Plan Design:

The reason I chose the sketches I did was because the bed is like the second main thing so I faced it frontwards so people could see it. The desk or table was also face frontwards so people could see it. I put the door on the side so when people entered you'd be able to see them really good and since the door is closer to the front you can also hear better, cause that where most of the talking went on. The window is on the other side of the room because in the play it made me think they crossed the whole room just to get to the window. That's all.



Minimal

The set design contains few of the elements identified in the play. There was little attempt to design an interior space called for in the script and the set pieces are located in one specific area of the stage. The student did not account for actor movement or play action. Little understanding of audience needs is apparent.